KALEIDOSCOPE

A One-Act Play with a

Western Setting

Freda Graham Bundy,
Cowley, Alberta, Canada.

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2nd Prize
Alberta Play Contest - 1945

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Kaleidoscope was awarded second prize in the 1945 Playwriting Competition sponsored by the Alberta Folklore and Local History Project.

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STORY: A day in a pioneer general store, revolves around and around as person after person appears, their individual lives bringing forth bright bits of color that fall into place and make a new phase in the eventful life of a western town. Kaleidoscopic in manner, the vast variety of material tumbles about, jumbled at times, but eventually forming an attractive whole, characteristic of that time, and known as a part of that undefinable thing - the western spirit.

CHARACTERS:

DAVE	- Proprietor of the general store
JOHN JONES	- A cattle rustler
SLIM JOHNSON	- A night-herder
MONTY	- Driver of the stage coach
ALGERNON WILLOWS	- An Englishman who has bought a ranch
MRS. WILLOWS	- His wife
MRS. BROWN	- A typical pioneer wife
MOUNTIE	- A member of the North-West Mounted Police
TOM	- A young rancher - newly married.
ANNABELLE	- His wife

COSTUMES AND PROPERTIES: Dave and Monty have blue jean trousers and dark shirts. Slim Johnson and Jones are dressed somewhat alike with ten-gallon hats, red shirts and bright neck scarves. The Mountie wears a regulation Mounted Police costume of scarlet jacket with brass buttons and braid, and dark trousers with yellow stripe up the side of the leg. Tom wears an old-fashioned "Sunday" suit and his wife may be very gay as the newly-married wife. Mrs. Willows is a middle-aged English lady, dressed either very fussily, or representing the "tweed suit and walking shoes" type. Algie Willows wears a khaki Norfolk jacket, breeches, leather leggings and a sun helmet.

The store may be fitted up as completely "in character" as desired, with the goods of the period from 1880-90. Algie and Mrs. Willows have ever so many bags and portmanteaus. Monty brings in several bundles and a sack of mail. A gun and a pair of handcuffs are needed for Algie's use, and a pair of leather gloves for Jones.

SCENE: The interior of a pioneer general store. Shelves at the back are piled with grey blankets, overalls, canned goods, etc. When the scene opens, John Jones, rolled in a grey blanket, is asleep on the counter, head pillowed on his folded coat. Dave enters from the right and approaches the sleeping man.

DAVE: Hey, young fellow, it's time to get up! The stage coach will soon be in and I need my counter for business.

(Jones stirs, stretches, then swings his feet to the floor, yawns and rubs his eyes)

JONES: Let me tell you, that's no feather tick, but I do appreciate the privilege.

DAVE: It's nothing, nothing at all. I just ask you to shake out the blanket and put it back on the shelf, Mister - a - what did you say your name was?

JONES: I didn't say. John Jones - that's as good as any - what's in a name?

DAVE: A heck of a lot when it's Rothschild or Vanderbilt. Are you from around these parts?

JONES: Yes and no - mostly no. (Goes to the door, shakes out blanket, folds it and places it on the shelf).

DAVE: If you want to wash, go 'round to the back - there's a bucket of water and a basin on the bench.

JONES: Thanks, just the same, but I'll stop by the river and freshen up! My partner's up country with the chuck wagon and I'm going to join him. Thanks for the sleeping privilege. Oh, by the way, give me a package of Bull Durham.

(Enter Slim Johnson)

SLIM: Howdy, Dave.

DAVE: 'Lo, Slim, where you been?

SLIM: Night herdin' for the Stewart outfit. Got any gloves, Dave? Some mangy coyote swiped mine.

DAVE: 'Nary a glove in the place. Expecting a few pair in on the stage.

SLIM: Drat the luck! Can't rope in my bare hands - got two rope burns already.

JONES: (Stepping forward) How about taking these - I've got a couple of pair in my outfit. (Holds out the gloves) These are nothing to write home about but they are an improvement on the bare hands.

SLIM: They're Jake with me. Thanks a lot.

JONES: Well, I'll be pushing on. So long!

DAVE and SLIM: (In unison) So long!

(Exit Jones)

SLIM: Now who in tucket is that?

DAVE: Wouldn't know him from Adam's off ox - stranger in these parts.

SLIM: I must be goin', Dave - got to catch up on some sleep - sat in on a poker game last night and lost everything but the shirt off my back.

DAVE: Should be saving your wages to buy cattle, Son.

SLIM: I guess you're right, Dave, but there's so little in the way of fun, that a fellow's just got to bust loose once in a while. I'll be seeing you.

(Exit Slim)

(Noise outside, shouts of "Whoa!" and a number of voices chattering)

DAVE: Here's the stage. (Hurries to the door)

(Algernon Willows and his wife are the first to enter. Mrs. Willows is decidedly perturbed, she brushes her clothes, straightens her hat and her hair, then looks about with great annoyance)

MRS. WILLOWS: What a beastly country and what a perfectly heathenish way to travel!

ALGIE: But I say, my dear, think how romantic the stage coach really is.

MRS. WILLOWS: Romantic! Don't be absurd, Algie. If that is your idea of romance, I'll take mine between the covers of a book.

(Enter Monty, the stage driver, and Algie approaches him)

ALGIE: I say, I'm worried about those beastly portmanteaus, that we were forced to leave at Coalbanks.

MONTY: By cricky, you brought about six bags on the stage - you sure didn't think we could bring all that stuff along and still have room for any passengers. You blokes always carry far too much.

MRS. WILLOWS: (Haughtily)- Algie, if you insist on coming amongst barbarians, you must expect all sorts of frightful things to happen. (Turns to Dave who is now behind the counter) - I say, my good man, is there a respectable inn at which persons may stay without being murdered in their beds?

DAVE: (Winking at Monty) - We don't murder people in their beds, ma'am. We usually wait until the wane of the moon and shoot them through the cabin window as they sit at their evening meal.

MONTY: Quite often we string them up to a cottonwood tree.

DAVE: Or tie 'em to their saddle horse and stampede the beast over a cut bank.

MRS. WILLOWS: Is this chattering supposed to be some low form of humor?

DAVE: It's what we call stringing a person, ma'am. A favorite sport in this country, but it's perfectly harmless. We rent rooms but just now we are full up. Going to ranch here?

ALGIE: I've just brought a topping lot of polo ponies from England and a mare that foaled three Derby winners.

DAVE: Holy doodlum! wait till Remi hears that. He and Alec each have the fastest half-mile horses in the country. They'll be racing them on sports day - July the fourth. (Points to the poster)

ALGIE: (In surprise) - July the fourth! Isn't that an American holiday?

DAVE: Sure is! We have American stamps here, American money and we celebrate American holidays.

ALGIE: Great heavens, what a ghastly state of affairs! Someone really should do something about it.

DAVE: We're a heck of a lot closer to Fort Benton than we are to Winnipeg and the East. We've got to do our business through Benton.

ALGIE: But really, you know, old top, this may lead to disloyalty to the British crown and all that.

DAVE: I reckon it's the only system till a railroad gets through.

(Tom enters, brushes against Algie on his way to the counter).

TOM: Excuse me, please.

ALGIE: Really, my man, have you any idea who I am?

TOM: (Looking Algie over from top to toe and staring at the helmet) - Well, you look like Kitchener from the Soo-dan.

ALGIE: (Haughtily) - I'll have you know that I am the son of an English gentleman.

TOM: I don't care if you are the son of a sea biscuit - it don't mean a thing out here in the West and I'm in a hurry. Dave, did Rogers leave his democrat for me?

DAVE: Not that I know of.

TOM: Plague take his flea-bitten hide! He was to leave it here so that I could use it to drive out to the ranch.

MONTY: Rogers and his wife were in Fort Macleod when we were there.

TOM: Well, the old buzzard! Have you got a rig of any sort, Dave?

DAVE: Nothing just now but the breaking cart.

(Tom goes to the door, calls "Annabelle" and Annabelle appears, giggling, in the doorway)

TOM: Think you can stand a four-mile ride in a breakin' cart, Annabelle?

ANNABELLE: What's a breaking cart, Tom?

TOM: It's a two-wheeled rig with just bare enough room to sit down and it rides like a buckin' broncho and just about breaks your back.

ANNABELLE: Oh, it sounds fun.

DAVE: Hey, Tom, is she your wife?

TOM: Yep, married in Ontario three weeks ago.

DAVE: Well, I'll be switched! Howdy and welcome, Mrs. Holt. How do you like the West?

ANNABELLE: Oh, isn't it wonderful! (Turns to Mrs. Willows) Wasn't it thrilling when the stage coach forded the river and the water came right through the flooring?

MRS. WILLOWS: (With disgust) - It may be your idea of a thrill, young lady, but it is not mine.

ANNABELLE: Oh, I love every bit of it - all the cowboy riders with their big hats and their beautiful neck-scarfs and the wonderful saddle horses and all those cattle we saw in those big, big pastures - and - and funny stores and hotels like this - why, I just wouldn't go back East for anything.

DAVE: That's the spirit! Hey, Monty, what's to hinder you lending Tom the stage coach to drive his bride out to the ranch. If your horses are winded he can take mine. Tom, get Two-Bits and Whiskey out of the barn and hitch them up. Monty, you go with them.

(Exit Tom, Annabelle and Monty)

ALGIE: I say, that was a ripping idea. You fellows have a free and easy way of doing things in this country.

DAVE: That's why folks like to live here. We are all sorts and kinds, we all have our ways and fancies, but somehow it all falls into place and makes something we call the spirit of the West.

(Enter the Mountie)

MOUNTIE: Good morning, Dave. Have you seen any stranger around here today - any cowboy?

DAVE: Why, yes, a fellow bedded down on my counter last night - didn't seem to have much in the way of luggage.

MOUNTIE: Can you describe him?

DAVE: (Raising his hand to the height of his head) - Oh, 'bout so high and something tall - wasn't fair, wasn't dark - had on a red shirt, ten-gallon hat, leather cuffs - but he wasn't no cowboy from 'round here.

MOUNTIE: Did he buy anything?

DAVE: He just came in about five last night - got a roll of baling wire.

MOUNTIE: Baling wire!

DAVE: Yeah - some that had been used - all rusty, but he said he could use it. Then he got tinned beef and some other canned stuff. Came back about ten and wanted a room. I was full up so I gave him a blanket and told him to make himself comfortable on the counter.

MOUNTIE: Was he on horseback?

DAVE: By cricky, yes, swellest sorrel I've seen since I don't know when. What's up, sergeant?

MOUNTIE: Some fellow is stealing cattle, slaughtering them and selling the beef to the railroad construction camps.

DAVE: Holy doodlum! I'll bet that's your man - had a roll of bills that would choke a yearling.

MOUNTIE: Any idea which way he went?

DAVE: To the river - up country, he said.

MOUNTIE: Thanks, Dave, I'll work down.

(Exit the Mountie)

ALGIE: I say, old boy, was that one of those jolly mounted police that we read about?

DAVE: That was it.

ALGIE: How perfectly ripping! Fancy meeting one, face to face. I've always been interested in crime - amateur detective and all that. Rather disgusting this cattle stealing and what not! Ceciley, I wonder if I shall like this country.

MRS. WILLOWS: Algie, I shall not stay in this ghastly place another day. Have the bags replaced in the stage - we are leaving.

ALGIE: Quite. Oh, but I say, my dear, the stage has gone with the bride and groom. Moreover, Ceciley, remember that I have purchased a ranch. It would be a crummy trick on the polo ponies and the mare to leave them alone in this desolate country.

MRS. WILLOWS: I positively refuse to stay.

DAVE: Whose place have you bought?

ALGIE: Were you addressing me, my good man?

DAVE: I was and I'm not your good man. Who did you buy your ranch from?

ALGIE: From whom? A person by the name of James Strothers.

DAVE: Long Jim! Why it's just down the creek here about a mile.

ALGIE: Oh, topping! Have someone inform the fellow that I am here.

DAVE: Reckon you'll have to do that yourself, Mister. This here's a great country for each fellow to stand on his own hind legs.

ALGIE: I beg your pardon.

DAVE: I mean you'll have to walk down there yourself to see Jim. Your woman can sit here till you get back.

MRS. WILLOWS: (Indignantly) - Woman! What a crude way you have of expressing yourself!

ALGIE: And you have a frightfully awkward way of doing things in this country. By the way, in which direction do I walk?

DAVE: (Pointing to the right) - Straight down the trail till you come to a big corral in a bunch of cottonwoods - Jim's cabin is just beyond.

ALGIE: Right-o. I'll be toddling along. Peep-peep and cheerio, Ceciley.

(Algie goes off muttering - "corral - cottonwood")

MRS. WILLOWS: (Suddenly looking around) - Where is that stage driver? Where is my brown bag?

(Monty enters)

MRS. WILLOWS: Oh, there you are. Young man, where is my brown bag? I had my appetite powders in a blue box, my pills in a pink one and my dyspepsia lozenges in a tin and they are all in my brown bag. I must have that brown bag.

MONTY: Ma'am, you've got four satchels here, three more outside and the six that we had to leave at Coalbanks. Perhaps that brown bag is outside.

(Mrs. Willows hurries out)

MONTY: (to Dave) - I've been on round-ups in a blizzard and I've roped steers when I couldn't see for dust and I'm tellin' you, Dave, handlin' horses and cattle is kid's play compared to herdin' human females.

(Enter Mrs. Brown)

DAVE: Good-day, Mrs. Brown, and how are you?

MRS. BROWN: Well, Dave, I feel as if every bone in my body is cracked. A person is certainly not sitting in the lap of luxury when they're ridin' in a buckboard over trails such as we have. Any darning needles, Dave?

DAVE: Sure thing - fifty cents apiece.

MRS. BROWN: Oh, but, Dave, that's beyond all reason.

DAVE: Well, if you can get them any cheaper, any place else, just let me know and I'll meet the price and besides, it's the freight - ten cents a pound from Benton.

MRS. BROWN: (Consulting her list) - And the price of that last sugar was a regular hold-up. Now, back East -

DAVE: That's what they all say - 'Back East'. Are you wishing you were back?

(As he speaks Mrs. Willows stands in the doorway, listening)

MRS. BROWN: Indeed not! I love this foothill country. I'm helping to shape the destiny of a future settlement. When I bump along in that old democrat I think that soon there will be railroads to carry us from town to town, then I look at my log cabin and dream of the fine frame house that we are someday to build. It's a country with a great future and I'm glad that I'm here to see it develop.

DAVE: Yes, ma'am, it sure is a next year country, but I know some women that don't talk as you do. A few of them expect this new country to supply 'em with all the luxuries that they had back East.

MRS. BROWN: I'll be truthful and admit that there's one thing I haven't learned to accept.

DAVE: Alkali water?

MRS. BROWN: No, sod roofs. I tacked chintz all over our ceiling rafters and it looked so pretty till that storm came last week.

MONTY: And what happened, ma'am?

MRS. BROWN: The rain just dripped, dripped through, bringing the earth and straw along with it and now, my beautiful ceiling bulges like a half-dozen cases of mumps.

MRS. WILLOWS: Oh, how horrible!

MRS. BROWN: Annoying, but it could be worse. What was the news from the outside, Monty?

MONTY: By cricky, things have been sizzling in Calgary. Dave, you know Cayley, the editor of the Calgary Herald?

DAVE: Sure do - good guy!

MONTY: Well, Magistrate Travis said Cayley wrote some rude articles about him and he sent him to jail in the barracks for contempt of court.

DAVE: What do you know!

MONTY: Cayley was allowed to choose his own time for deliverin' himself up. Well, half the town escorted Cayley to jail with a torchlight procession headed by a brass band and at each saloon along the way they stopped for a little snort to thaw out the instruments, and every time they stopped, Cayley gave them a stirring spiel on the 'Freedom of the Press'.

DAVE: Golly, that must have been some sight. You know, Monty, that Travis ain't got the spirit of the West - he's still an Easterner. Why, he sentenced an alderman to do six months on the woodpile of the Mounted Police barracks - for mere nothing.

MRS. WILLOWS: (Addressing Monty) - Young man, gather your wits about you - just where is my brown bag?

MONTY: Well, ma'am, as I recollect, the last time I seen you with it was at Macleod. I reckon maybe it is at Kanoose's place.

MRS. WILLOWS: Oh, how awful! I just cannot do without my dyspepsia lozenges. I wouldn't dare to eat. (approaches the counter) My man, have you Howarth's Anti-Dyspepsia lozenges?

DAVE: No, ma'am, sorry. Got pain-killer, soothin' syrup, mange cure, but no dyspepsia medicine.

MRS. BROWN: Pardon me, I have a whole package of them - but they are back at the ranch. Where are you staying?

MONTY: They've bought Long Jim's place.

MRS. BROWN: Oh, if that's the case, why not come back to our ranch with me - and spend the night.

MRS. WILLOWS: Why, my good woman, I have never met you - I - I do not even know your name.

MRS. BROWN: We do not bother about that in this country - we concentrate more on being good neighbors and helping one another whenever there's an occasion. I really think you had better come with me. You see, Long Jim is a pretty awful housekeeper and you would get quite a shock if you went right out to that place of his. I'll go down with you tomorrow and we'll have a day cleaning it up.

MRS. WILLOWS: I - I - why, I never did such a thing in my life.

MRS. BROWN: Very well, I'll do the cleaning and you watch me.

DAVE: Ma'am, that's what we call the spirit of the West.

MRS. WILLOWS: I am beginning to understand.

MRS. BROWN: Monty, you put her bags in the back of our democrat. Think you can ride in a democrat, Mrs. - ah -

MRS. WILLOWS: Willows - Ceciley Willows. If you ride in the democrat, then I am willing to try.

MONTY: Good girl! You're catchin' on mighty fast.

MRS. BROWN: And now, Dave, will you finish my order - two pounds of tea, can of cinnamon, package of caraway seed, two pounds of dried apples, half-dozen cakes of soap -

DAVE: No soap, Mrs. Brown, till the bull team gets back from Benton with supplies.

(Voices outside and Algie enters, urging Slim forward at the point of a gun)

ALGIE: In you go! Here's the thief who was stealing the cattle.

MRS. WILLOWS: (shrieking) - Great heavens, Algie, where did you get that gun?

ALGIE: I brought it from England, my love, for just such occasions as this.

DAVE: Slim! For the love of Pete, what's up?

SLIM: The guy's loco. Tell him, Dave, that you know me.

ALGIE: He is the fellow for whom the Mounted Police is searching - red shirt, large hat, sorrel horse.

SLIM: Dave, I've just got to get back to the creek. I was riding along the bank when I noticed a bale of hides bound around with baling wire - weighted down in one of the deepest holes. I prowled around and found the place where they have been slaughtering some of the animals - back in the brush. It's that guy that spent the night here.

DAVE: Holy doodlum! How do you know?

SLIM: Easy! Look at these gloves that he gave me - marks of rust and cow hair. Then I found several cigarette butts on the ground and they all had a little blood on them. Didn't you notice this morning that he had a badly cracked lip?

DAVE: By gum, I believe you're right.

(Enter the Mountie in considerable excitement)

MOUNTIE: Dave, Slim, Monty, get your guns. (Looks about and sees Algie with a gun). Hey, what goes on here?

MONTY: Lord Plushbottom, here, thought he had rounded up a cattle rustler, but it was only Slim and Slim had just about rounded up the guy that slept here last night. Is it him you're after, Sergeant?

MOUNTIE: No, I'm after a murderer.

MRS. WILLOWS: Oh, heavens! What a country! Who was murdered? This is simply horrible! I think I am going to faint.

ALGIE: Not now, Ceciley - not now. (Approaches the Mountie) Ahem, I say, old fellow, would you mind if I came along? We have not been properly introduced but I am Algernon Throckmorton Willows. I think it would be topping fun to assist you in the search for the murderer. Whom do you suspect?

MOUNTIE: We know who did it. It is an Indian by the name of Charcoal - a bad fellow who already has a murder and several shootings to his record. We have been trailing him for days and this afternoon he shot Sergeant Wilde - point blank and deliberately.

DAVE: Not Wilde! He was an awfully decent chap. It's a damn shame!

MOUNTIE: You're right there - a fine officer sacrificed in the attempted capture of a bad Indian. We're organizing a real man-hunt and want everyone who owns a rifle to join in the search.

SLIM: What about this cattle rustler? I know I was on his tracks and I'm willing to bet any money that he's now on the trail to the construction camp for there's evidence of cattle having been slaughtered this morning and I can prove to you that the fellow who slept on the counter last night, assisted in the slaughtering.

MOUNTIE: I can't pass that up. Dave, will you and Monty round up as many men as possible and strike off after Charcoal. We think he might be in the hills beyond the Thibadeau place. I'll go with Slim and try to run down this cattle rustler.

DAVE: Monty, you round up all the available men in town - tell them to meet here and we'll start off as soon as possible. Mrs. Brown, I'll finish putting up your order and then I'll lock up. Heck, no, I can't do that - it's mail day and some of them folks will be driving in for miles.

MRS. BROWN: Dave, I can stay in town until late afternoon - I'll tend the store. Perhaps Mr. and Mrs. Willows will help me.

MRS. WILLOWS: Most assuredly. I am beginning to be very interested in this weird country.

MOUNTIE: (Turning to Algie) - It might be a wise idea for you to stay with the women. There may be such a thing that Charcoal will make his way here for food. If he should come, don't be afraid to use your gun. Come, Slim, we've got work to do.

(Exit Mountie and Slim)

DAVE: Mrs. Brown, I'd better put the money box away - I'll leave out a bit of change for you. Now, if Connelly comes in with the bull team, take the freight and tell him I'll pay the charges next trip. Better not give any goods out for jaw bone less you're sure of who it is. When you leave, lock up and take the key over to 'Auntie'.

MONTY: Dave, while I'm ridin' 'round town you better go over to the barracks and get some extra ammunition. If they've got any spare rifles, better snaffle on to them.

DAVE: Oh, them fellows at the barracks will be half-way to the hills by now - most of them would be with Wilde. However, I'll go scouting for more ammunition and meet you by the hitching rail. Keep your eyes and ears open, folks.

(Exit Monty and Dave. Mrs. Brown goes behind the counter, Mrs. Willows seats herself on an upturned box and Algie looks over his gun)

ALGIE: I must say this is a beastly way to hunt criminals - left behind with two women.

MRS. WILLOWS: But, Algie, I should have been frightfully worried had you gone hunting that murderous savage. He might have scalped you.

MRS. BROWN: You really are doing something worth while by remaining with us, for as the Mountie said, the Indian may come here for food.

ALGIE: I should be jolly glad if he did come. Fancy me capturing a criminal, single-handed! I say, that would be topping! Really, you know, it would be more thrilling than raising horses.

MRS. BROWN: What is your brand, Mr. Willows?

ALGIE: My brand? Oh, you mean my crest? Well, you see, it's a lion rampant on a green field, over a shield that has three laurel leaves and -

MRS. BROWN: You misunderstood me. I mean what sign or letters will be branded on your stock? It is the custom to brand the animals with a hot iron, in a form of some particular sort - such as Lazy S, Double Bar, Circle U and the like.

ALGIE: I say, do you really mean that? What a frightfully barbarous custom! Fancy burning the poor creatures! I certainly shall not submit my stock to such inhuman treatment.

MRS. WILLOWS: Indeed, we shall not! It is a fiendish practice.

MRS. BROWN: No, it really doesn't hurt them so very much - it singes off the hair and slightly sears the flesh and soon heals. If you don't do it, you'll lose all your stock - cattle rustlers will run them right off your range. (Looks up to the window) Ah, there goes Monty and a half-dozen riders. Here's hoping that they capture Charcoal.

(Mrs. Willows goes to the window and looks out. Suddenly she becomes tense and turns with a frightened face to the other two)

MRS. WILLOWS: There is a man approaching - he has a red shirt, a high hat and a sorrel horse - you don't suppose - Algie, what a ghastly thing it would be if -

ALGIE: (Looking out without going too close to the window) - By Jove, I do believe - I say, wouldn't it be topping if - Ceciley, get behind the counter with Mrs. Brown and whatever you do, my love, please do not faint - I should have no time to revive you. Steady now, here he comes!

(Mrs. Willows hurries behind the counter and Jones enters, as Algie slips to the room at the right)

JONES: Good morning, ladies.

MRS. BROWN (abruptly) - Good morning.

MRS. WILLOWS: G-g-good m-m-morning.

JONES: I want to stock up a bit on supplies. What's up? I see the men all leaving town.

MRS. BROWN: They're off on a man-hunt - after a bad Indian, Charcoal - he murdered a mounted policeman.

JONES: I wouldn't mind if they murdered a few more.

MRS. BROWN: That's a very strange thing to say. I think the only enemies of the police, in this country, are the law-breakers.

MRS. WILLOWS: One of the Mounties is after a - a - cattle rustler.

JONES: Indeed, that's interesting - hope he gets him.

MRS. BROWN: Yes, we hope the same thing. A cattle rustler is about as low as a rattle snake, in my opinion. Across the line, the ranchers usually string cattle thieves up to cotton-wood trees.

JONES: Over here, the rustlers are just a little too smart for the cattle men.

ALGIE: (from the doorway) - Not always. Put up your hands! (He advances with pointed gun and Jones throws up his hands)

JONES: Good Lord! Trapped by an Englishman that's still wet behind the ears.

MRS. BROWN: He's not as green as you think - and the gun's loaded - and he means business.

ALGIE: Thanks, jolly of you to say so. Ceciley, look in the black portmanteau and get the hand-cuffs - it really was a ripping idea of mine to bring them, wasn't it!

(Mrs. Willows opens the bag, gets the hand-cuffs and snaps them on Jones' wrists)

ALGIE: Now, my man, you'd better sit down on that box and make yourself comfortable - we may have a long wait, you know.

(Shoves Jones down on to the upturned box and seats himself on another, quite near)

MRS. BROWN: Well, is everyone going to get a surprise! I've got to hand it to you, Mr. Willows. That's the beauty of living in this country - life is never dull - it's just one surprise after another.

ALGIE: I rather fancy that western life is like those jolly little toys for children, where all the various shapes and colors keep revolving about, making new patterns continually - a - a -

MRS. WILLOWS: Kaleidoscope, my dear.

ALGIE: Ah, yes, quite so. Very appropriate. (Settles back and smiles) Really, I say, Ceciley, I think I am going to like this country. Quite!

CURTAIN

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